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TWO STUDIES ON VIETNAM

I

The Origins and Nature of the Viet Cong

II

The Origins and Nature of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam

NOTE TO PAO'S AND INFO OFFICERS:

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(Editor's note: This study is one of a series prepared by the Government of Australia's Department of External Affairs.)

THE ORIGINS AND NATURE OF THE VIET CONG

The questions are continually asked whether the Viet Cong and the National Liberation Front represent a strong indigenous movement; whether they have the genuine support of the people of South Viet Nam; whether they are more nationalist than Communist; and whether they are the rallying point for true Vietnamese nationalism in the South.

Vietnamese Communist Party

Before the questions can be answered a brief account is required of the history of the Vietnamese Communist Party. Historically, before the Japanese overran the area, the Communist Party of Indo-China under Ho Chi Minh covered the area of the component States of Viet Nam (Tonkin, Annam and Cochin China) and, as well, Laos and Cambodia. Traditional Vietnamese predominance within the Indo-China communist movement was reasserted after the war. In March, 1951, a meeting was held between the Vietnamese, the Pathet Lao and Khmer (Cambodian) Liberation Committee, described by the pro-Viet Cong author Wilfred Burchett in his book "Mekong Upstream" (page 113):

"On March 3, 1951, there was a Conference of representatives of the Khmer National United Front and parallel organizations which had been set up in Viet Nam and Laos. It was decided to set up a Viet Nam-Khmer-Lao Alliance which called on the people of the three countries to co-ordinate their fight to defeat the colonialists. It was on the basis of these decisions published on March 11, 1951, that Vietnamese volunteers later entered Cambodia and Laos to fight side by side with the Khmer Issarak forces—by then the Khmer National Liberation army and the Pathet Lao forces."

At the Geneva Conference of 1954, the representatives of Khmer and Lao "resistance movements" were in a subordinate relationship to the Viet Minh, and the senior Viet Minh military representative signed the Cambodian and Laotian cease-fire agreements on their behalf. According to Bernard Fall, "the effective satellization of the Cambodian and Laotian Communist movements under Vietnamese aegis was clearly illustrated at the Geneva Conference of 1954."*

Within Viet Nam, through the technique of spearheading a nationalist movement, and with substantial Chinese material help, the Vietnamese Communist Party was successful in taking over the lead in the nationalist revolutionary struggle against the French. Its influence was at work over the whole of Viet Nam and not simply in the North, although the Geneva Agreement of 1954 confirmed its authority in the North only.

From 1954 onwards, under the leadership and control of the Vietnamese Communist Party, North Viet Nam developed a strong military establishment, converting the former guerrilla force into a large, trained standing Army. The North Vietnamese Forces now possess technical skills and knowledge for conventional operations as well as the background experience of guerrilla warfare and political indoctrination. Its aims and activities have not been confined to North Viet Nam.

In Laos, where racially the Vietnamese are distinguishable from the local peoples, indeed are disliked and feared by the local people, North Viet Nam has nevertheless maintained constant pressure and interference against the legitimate Laotian Government through assisting the dissident Pathet Lao

* "Problems of Communism", July, 1965, page 18.

with Vietnamese cadres and troops. In a recent statement Prince Souvanna Phouma, the neutralist Prime Minister of Laos, who has intimate, personal knowledge derived from direct association with the Pathet Lao, declared:

"It is true that North Vietnamese troops have played a leading part in the fighting during the civil war which has been going on for more than 20 years as I myself can confirm from the time I spent in Khang Khay. The Pathet Lao who at the start had only two battalions or about 1200 men at their command can hardly claim they were in a position to overcome Government forces of more than 20,000. Indeed if the Pathet Lao have not disappeared from the scene it is because of the support they have received from their North Vietnamese ally, who has maintained, armed, trained and officered the Pathet Lao forces in their guerrilla activities. Here lies the secret of the interminable crisis of Laos. There is no need to look any further for the reasons why a political party, originally made up of an insignificant handful of Marxist revolutionaries, should have survived."*

If North Viet Nam is prepared to commit itself to such a degree in Laos, it can be no surprise that it has so deeply involved itself in South Viet Nam where, in fact, some areas were always strongholds of the Vietnamese Communist Party. While the Geneva Agreement drew a demarcation line between North and South and provided for the existence of separate administrations in the two zones, the leaders of the Vietnamese Communist Party in Hanoi never saw this as deterring the prosecution of what they call the "Vietnamese revolution", that is the struggle for communist control of the whole of Viet Nam. The emergence of a non-communist Government in the South, in the nature of things, was almost bound to be faced with the challenge of Communist insurrection and attack.

Background of the Viet Cong

The post-war environment of Viet Nam, South as well as North, offered favourable circumstances to a militant and revolutionary movement. The period was characterised by the disturbance of war and violence; by a background of alien colonial rule which had failed to produce an effective successor nationalist administration; by traditional rural indifference, if not aversion, to a remote, urban Central Government; and by the existence of ethnic minorities living in conditions of isolation and backwardness. In respect of communications, roads, bridges and railways, the conditions for rapidly knitting together the country did not exist. The greater part of the country being deep swamp, rain forest, or jungle, provided great advantages of natural cover for a guerrilla movement. The Communists, veterans in guerrilla tactics and organization in an Asian environment, were experienced and knowledgeable in using and exploiting these conditions.

After the Geneva Agreement of 1954 was concluded, it has been estimated that about 100,000 persons moved to the North, under the provisions on free movement of peoples and regrouping, while other hard core Communists remained and hid their weapons. Those who stayed organized secretly and from the outset developed a campaign of subversion and sabotage but not on a scale which was a serious security threat. Many of those who went North, Southerners by birth and Communist by conviction, were further trained and indoctrinated within the Party, taking part in the work of consolidating the Party control over the North.

We can only speculate as to why North Viet Nam waited until 1959 before committing itself to the stepping-up of insurgency on a vast scale in

* "North Vietnamese Interference in Laos" issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vientiane, 5th December, 1964.

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the South. The reasons may have included the fact that South Viet Nam had not fallen apart and disintegrated (and, on the contrary, was making economic progress); and they may have been related to compulsions at work within the Communist leadership in Hanoi. We don't precisely know. At some time in 1959 Hanoi decided to intensify the insurgency in the South and persons of Southern origin in the North Vietnamese Armed Forces, now with more than five years' service in the Army, highly trained in conventional and guerrilla operations, were sent to special politico-military training camps and then infiltrated into the South. The great majority had served with the Viet Minh in the struggle against the French. They became the backbone of the Viet Cong movement in the South and provided it with an experienced revolutionary organization and leadership. They came to the South, indoctrinated with the Marxist ideology of the North Vietnamese region, with a sense of mission of throwing out the "American imperialists" as they had the French before them. (It should be noted that the American military advisory mission in the South numbered only between 600 and 700 men in the middle of 1961.

These men, too, were the fathers, elder brothers, or uncles of younger men in the South, many of whom—according to prisoner reports—regarded them as heroic Viet Minh fighters against the French. As is to be expected with a movement which is Communist in origin, Communist control has remained absolute. It is estimated from the interrogation of prisoners that almost all the officers of the Viet Cong regular force are Party members. Membership of the People's Revolutionary Party of South Viet Nam and the Vietnamese Communist Party, the Lao Dong, based on Hanoi, is interchangeable and seniority in one counts as service seniority in the other. (For a discussion of the People's Revolutionary Party see the companion study, "The Nature and Origins of the National Front of Liberation of South Viet Nam".)

Out of total population of 15,000,000 in the South, the Viet Cong number in the neighbourhood of 160,000. Some 45,000 are in regular military combat units and about 15,000 are in regular rear supporting units and reserves. There are from 80,000 to 100,000 irregulars who take part in guerrilla fighting in their own provinces. Since 1959, over 40,000 persons have joined the Viet Cong through infiltration from the North. More recently, the infiltrates have been persons of Northern and not Southern descent, as this source of Southern manpower has been depleted. (Entire formed units of the North Vietnamese Army have also been introduced in the course of this year, but they are outside the scope of this study.)

Recruitment and Expansion of the Viet Cong

How have the Viet Cong attracted and maintained recruits? As already stated, the process of building the movement began from the existence of the large number of professional Communist cadres and their re-activation in a skilled revolutionary organization in the South. Once begun, the Viet Cong effort was organized along standard Communist lines; with prospects of advancement within the structure for the capable recruit; and with the exercise of a disciplinary system of the "cell" or "three-three" group. Such units were used earlier in the Chinese Communist Army. Under the leadership of the most politically mature and experienced man, these groups of three live, work and confide fully in each other and pledge their inseparability "in work, combat and death". Criticism and self-criticism sessions are held daily, usually at the "three-three" cell level, but occasionally even up to the battalion level.

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Some areas in the South, for example the Camau peninsula of mangrove swamps, had never in recent years been freed from Communist control. The Viet Cong strategy was to gain control over additional areas and of the manpower within them, systematically destroying all forms of opposition. It is on the record in the findings of the International Control Commission that—"Those who ignore their exhortation (i.e. of the Viet Cong) and continue to support the Administration in the South have been threatened with punishment and in certain cases such punishment has been effected by the carrying out of death sentences". Viet Cong terrorism—assassination, torture and kidnapping—was politically conceived and aimed towards disrupting the Government's administration and services. Horrifying figures have been gathered together and assessed concerning the cold-blooded murder of many thousands of village and provincial officials, school teachers, doctors and medical workers and the like. In areas of Viet Cong control, as far as can be gleaned from the available evidence (including the questioning of prisoners and defectors) the pattern has been for the Viet Cong (a) to destroy Government control through terror and murder and (b) to victimise any persons of means or property, forcing them to flee into provincial towns. In this way, the Viet Cong has come to exert dominant influence over considerable rural areas and of the remaining poor peasants within them.

For the young men in these areas service with the Viet Cong on a part time or regular basis has been an inevitable consequence of the exercise of Viet Cong control, whether undertaken voluntarily or by being drafted. According to the statements of prisoners and defectors, it is made clear by the Viet Cong that military service is expected and required, whether or not the young man or boy is willing. The poor peasant class, from whom the bulk of Viet Cong recruits comes, has found itself in the traditional role of obeying authority, in this case the Viet Cong. It is difficult to gain a clear picture of the proportion of volunteers to draftees, but it is apparent that as time has gone on the Viet Cong has had to rely increasingly on coercion for recruitment. In many areas, as recent captures have shown, the Viet Cong have conscripted boys of 15 and 16 years.

Political Aims and Programmes of the Viet Cong

The Viet Cong and its political arm the National Liberation Front do not appear to base themselves on programmes of reform and human betterment but, first, on a crude xenophobic propaganda that South Viet Nam is an American colony run by puppets of the United States and, secondly, on a brutal "class war" aim of physically destroying the so-called rich peasants, the middle classes and the administration officials. We read claims by the Viet Cong and the Front about their establishing schools and clinics and other forms of social welfare and developing systems of taxation and authority. But we do not know how many schools and clinics nor the basis of the system of taxation nor the say exercised by the taxpayer. There is nothing to suggest that these arrangements are liberally conceived and progressive while, on the other hand, there is abundant evidence of the impoverishment of the countryside brought about by the Viet Cong themselves through the destruction of roads, bridges and schools and the like.

Failure of the Viet Cong to Generate Political Support

The failure of the Viet Cong to attract broadly based political support is striking. As will be discussed later, no leading political figures are attracted to the movement. There is little or no upsurge of popular support for the Viet Cong in the towns or cities. Political progress is achieved solely through guerrilla methods of exerting power in rural areas.

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The record of the North is the mirror of the Viet Cong. The Viet Cong movement in the South derives from the basic system of thought, planning and ideology of the Vietnamese Communist Party, the governing Party of the North. The methods and aims of the regime in the North are imported by the Viet Cong and the Front into the areas of South Viet Nam where they prevail—except in respect of matters like Communist agricultural policy which could alienate the peasant. The record of the North in economic and social achievement and human welfare will have filtered through to large elements of the population of the South. Food production in North Viet Nam has been well below planned targets and food imports have become necessary; food production per head of population has decreased by about one-fifth in recent years. In contrast, rice production in the South rose from 2 to 3,000,000 tons in the period from the Geneva Agreement in 1954 until 1960. The North's record is one of continuous uncertainty and failure in the agricultural field; of violation and infringement of individual rights to property and security; of the killing of so-called "class enemies"; and, in the political field, it is a record of rigid authoritarian administration with no popular or representative participation.

It is well known that something like a million people, or one in 15 of the present population of South Viet Nam, preferred to take their chance in the uncertain future of the South by fleeing the North after the Geneva Agreement of 1954. It is less well known that there has been a continued exodus within the South from areas where the Viet Cong are in strength. A further mass movement took place earlier this year when the Viet Cong mounted their offensives in the central and northern regions of South Viet Nam. Over 400,000 refugees fled from areas occupied by the Viet Cong into the cities and towns held by the Government forces, causing serious refugee problems.

"Control" of Areas

It is difficult to be precise about the proportions of the population which are said to be under Viet Cong control and the proportions of the population which are said to be under Government control, or the percentage of the geographical areas of the country said to be held by each of them. The Communist side, including the official Chinese press, puts forth the extraordinary proposition that nine-tenths of the country and 10,000,000 of the population are under the control of the Viet Cong and the Liberation Front. How this could be so when the Viet Cong is not in occupation of any of the 43 provincial capitals would require some explanation. What would also require explanation is the turn-out of voters in a recent election. This is a practical event, able to be measured statistically and capable of interpretation. Elections were held for provincial and municipal councils in South Viet Nam on 30th May last wherever possible. Votes were cast by 3,412,000 people. That is, about half the total adult population of South Viet Nam actually voted. The Australian Embassy, in a despatch sent at the time, said:

"The successful holding of the elections was a considerable achievement for the Government. Interest in the elections even in disputed areas seems to have been strong. This is borne out by the substantial vote cast and reports of evident local interest in the elections in areas where Viet Cong influence is strong. In some areas, people exercised their vote even at some risk to themselves."

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This has more significance than large unverifiable claims to control over population on behalf of the Viet Cong and the National Front. In any case what does "control" mean? How is "control" imposed and maintained? Is an area not under Government "control" if a guerrilla attack can be launched and a number of people killed under cover of darkness? In point of fact the word "control" carries two different meanings. The Government's duty is to secure and maintain control over the population centres of the villages, towns and cities and over the transport system, installations and so on. The guerrillas have no such commitments to static defence and can melt away in areas they claim to "control" at the approach of Government forces. Accordingly, they can establish their "presence" over very wide areas. In order to dominate an area and the people within it they do not need to maintain a comprehensive system of administration but rather to deny the Government effective, continuing authority.

Turbulent Nationalism

It is sometimes thought that political instability within the Republic of South Viet Nam is indicative of support for the Viet Cong or of dispiritedness and apathy. Neither conclusion is justified. On the contrary, there is a great deal of political vitality which is non-Communist in nature and motivation. While it has proved difficult for the various interests to sink their differences in the interests of unity, and although the Viet Cong have tried hard to foment and aggravate these differences, it is at the same time significant that none of the groups concerned has seen advantage in seeking to cultivate the Front. In all the conflicts of political interests and rivalries that have occurred, there have been no attempts by any of the major groupings to seek an association or alliance with the National Liberation Front. No leading South Vietnamese political figure has gone over to the National Front. Successive governments have continued the struggle against the Viet Cong and none has sought or won power with a programme of coming to terms with the Viet Cong and the Front.

In short, the people of South Viet Nam keep on trying to find governments of their own and they are keeping on fighting under the successive governments that have emerged. Since the overthrow of Diem by coup in November 1963, South Viet Nam has had several governments, but they have been formed by processes of adjustment and reshuffle and not by persecution and the liquidation of political opponents. Viet Nam, North or South, has never known modern, stable, representative government. A Communist solution of one party government, backed by military power, has been applied in the North. But in the South the evolution of complex social forces to find equilibrium continues. Strong divisions exist on the basis of religion, region, and political grouping, and there is a further variety of cultural background. Successive governments seek to balance these elements in their composition and with the coming to influence of younger Vietnamese-educated elements, they are reaching deeper into the roots of national life.

Despite political frictions and rivalries, a strong sense of nationalism and Vietnamese identity persists. Many South Vietnamese believe that they represent the true spirit of Vietnamese nationalism and that the Lao Dong Party in the North has created, in defiance of all the traditions of the Vietnamese people, the most rigidly controlled Communist state outside Communist China itself. There are many Vietnamese nationalists in South Viet Nam who supported and fought for the Viet Minh in the war against the French but by 1954 they recognized the purely Communist nature of the North Vietnamese regime. Some of them are now members of the South

Vietnamese Government. Others are now officers in the South Vietnamese Armed Forces. Since 1954 the Armed Forces have suffered nearly 80,000 casualties with more than 26,000 killed. Their will to continue the struggle has not been broken.

The argument just traced can be illustrated by reference to the Buddhists who were recently in the forefront of public agitation. The Buddhists have felt strongly enough about their position in the social and political structure of South Viet Nam to oppose governments of the day, to engage in public demonstration and to allow members to sacrifice themselves. But at the same time the Buddhist leadership has called upon all Buddhists to oppose the Communists. On 12th April last, the powerful Buddhist Association in Saigon declared:

"In rural areas, the Communists have occupied pagodas, confiscated lands, forbidden religious activities, forced Buddhist priests to enter the Army, indulged in savage denunciations and arrested and killed loyal Buddhist faithful of the Buddhist Association. . . .

The Buddhist Association sincerely praises the noble sacrifices of Buddhist priests and faithful in the defence of Faith and Religion and prays at the same time for the liberation of the Nation and the Religion from control and subversion by the Communists."

The Front and the Viet Cong are not Self-Sustaining Movements

The companion study on the nature and origins of the National Front shows how the Front was established as the instrument of the ruling authorities in Hanoi and how the leadership within the Front is claimed by a branch of the Vietnamese Communist Party. A detailed analysis also follows on the infiltration of men and equipment from the North. It is clear that the Viet Cong movement comprises a complex organization reaching back into North Viet Nam for large numbers of fresh forces; modern war equipment; secure base areas and resources; re-training and rest facilities; networks of communications and command.

This being so, the following questions pose themselves: If the Viet Cong and the Front represented a strong, indigenous force, truly representative of the people, why did not North Viet Nam, and those associated with it, allow the situation to "mature" or "ripen"—to use concepts from Marxist terminology? Would not customary Communist practice have been to exercise careful, underground control of the liberation movement until the final, decisive stages of the capture of power? Why should North Viet Nam have committed itself to an extensive system of organized infiltration which was bound to attract, as it did, the attention of the International Control Commission and to be reported upon as a violation of the Geneva Agreement? Why should North Viet Nam have taken steps—including decisions to commit regular units of their Armed Forces—which carried the possibility, to put it at the lowest, that the United States would substantially increase its support to the South? Further, why was North Viet Nam willing to accept the risks it was running in respect of retaliatory operations against the territory of North Viet Nam itself in openly violating the Geneva Agreement? The questions allow one answer. North Viet Nam felt obliged to commit resources directly to the Viet Cong movement because it had become apparent with the passage of time after the Geneva Agreement that the Communist dissident elements in the South were failing to generate popular support or to develop the strength and momentum to overthrow the Government of the Republic of Viet Nam.

(Editor's note: This study is one of a series prepared by the Government of Australia's Department of External Affairs.)

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According to the position currently taken by the North Vietnamese authorities . . . "The internal affairs of South Viet Nam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves, in accordance with the programme of the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation. . . . It is clear that at the present time any solution to the South Viet Nam issue without the decisive voice of the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation is impractical."*

Peking describes the National Front as "the sole and genuine representatives of South Viet Nam".†

Against this background of full and unqualified support for the Front by Hanoi and Peking, it is instructive to trace the origins of the Front and its character.

The Foundation of the Front

The Front first came to notice on 20th December, 1960 when it announced its foundation and issued a manifesto and a programme calling for the overthrow of what it called the disguised colonial regime of the United States imperialists and the dictatorial Diem administration in South Viet Nam. It undertook to bring about a reunification of Viet Nam on the principle of negotiations and discussions between the two zones. There were no reports of inaugural meetings of the Front and no description was given of the members composing it.

The First Congress of the Front was held two years later in February and March, 1962, with some fifteen "peace", "revolutionary" and "liberation" organizations taking part. The formation of most of the organization was reported by Hanoi Radio in the period between the announcement of the foundation of the Front and the First Congress. Several of these bodies shared the same office-holders and they closely paralleled organizations making up the "Fatherland Front" of North Viet Nam. It was not until April, 1962, that the names of the Front's leaders were published. The named office-bearers of the Front were little-known Southern Vietnamese, the President being a former Saigon lawyer, Nguyen Huu Tho.

The Front, of course, has no permanent administrative and political headquarters in a South Vietnamese town or district capital. It has, however, energetically sought to acquire international standing and, in addition to Hanoi, has now established offices abroad in Peking, Moscow, Algiers, Djakarta, Havana and Prague. The officials of the Front travelling abroad do so with North Vietnamese passports. It is to be presumed that their requirements for foreign exchange are met by North Viet Nam.

The earlier use of a "Front" by the Vietnamese Communist Party

The establishment of a National Front for South Viet Nam follows the same pattern as that adopted by the Vietnamese Communist Party in the original campaign against the French in Viet Nam. In his book, "People's

*North Vietnamese statement on the appeal of non-aligned countries concerning Viet Nam, 20th April, 1956.

†Chinese "People's Daily" of 21st June, 1965.

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War, People's Army", published in 1961, North Viet Nam's Defence Minister, General Vo Nguyen Giap described the establishment of the original liberation front, the Lien Viet, and its role in the successful capture of power by the Communists in North Viet Nam. He described in clear terms how the Front was established as an instrument of Communist policy and how it was dominated by the Communist Party. He says: "The Vietnamese people's war of liberation was victorious because we had a wide and firm National United Front . . . organized and led by the Party of the working class: the Indo-Chinese Communist Party, now the Viet Nam Workers' Party. . . . It was the Party which found a correct solution to the problems arising out of the setting up and leadership of a people's army, people's power and national united front". This candid statement can be read in conjunction with the views of the British scholar on Viet Nam, P. J. Honey, who referred to the fiction employed by Ho Chi Minh that the Vietnamese resistance movement was basically a nationalist movement and who, according to Honey, concealed the tight Communist control within an elaborate front organization.*

It is not difficult to trace the adoption and the employment of the same tactics for the conduct of the "war of liberation" in South Viet Nam. The Viet Nam Communist Party (Lao Dong), that is, the Governing Party in Hanoi, launched the plan for a Liberation Front for South Viet Nam at its Third Congress in Hanoi in September, 1960. The announcement of the founding of the Front, complete with programme but without identified leaders, was made two and a half months later.

The connection between the Front and Hanoi

Extracts from the major introductory Party statement made and resolution passed at the Third Congress follow. In accordance with normal Communist practice, the basic policy outlined in this statement was no doubt the product of previous intensive examination and deliberation at the highest levels of the Party, that is, the leadership of the Government of North Viet Nam. The First Secretary of the Party, Le Duan, who made the statement, is, of course, one of the key North Vietnamese political leaders and as recently as April, 1965, visited Moscow as head of a North Vietnamese delegation for official talks.

Extracts from the political report of the Central Committee of the Lao Dong Party delivered at the Party's Third Congress in Hanoi by Le Duan, First Secretary of the Committee, on September 5, 1960.

"At present our party is facing momentous tasks: to promote socialist construction in the North and to consolidate the North into an ever more solid base for the struggle for national reunification; to strive to complete the national people's democratic revolution throughout the country; to liberate the South from the atrocious rule of the US imperialists and their henchmen; to achieve national reunification on the basis of independence and democracy; to build a peaceful, unified, independent, democratic, prosperous, and strong Viet Nam. . . .

The socialist revolution is carried out in the North while in the South we have to make every effort to achieve a broad national unity embracing all the national and democratic forces, all forces opposed to the United States imperialists and Ngo Dinh Diem. In building and consolidating the

*P. J. Honey, "Communism in North Viet Nam", page 16.

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North, we must on the one hand keep firmly to the line of socialist construction and, on the other, pay the greatest attention to the situation in the South, help create further conditions for the rallying of all patriotic forces opposed to the United States-Diem regime in the South into a broad national united front with the worker-peasant alliance as its basis, and ensure the victory of the revolutionary struggle in the South. Our guiding principle in carrying out the socialist revolution in the North is: consolidate the North, and in so doing, take the South into due consideration.

. . . the southern people's revolutionary struggle will be long, drawn out, and arduous. It is not a simple process but a complicated one, combining many varied forms of struggle—from elementary to advanced, legal and illegal—and based on the building, consolidation and development of the revolutionary force of the masses. In this process, we must constantly intensify our solidarity and the organization and education of the people of the South—especially the workers, peasants, and the intellectuals—and must uphold the revolutionary fighting spirit of all strata of patriotic compatriots. . . .

In order to assure the complete victory of the revolutionary struggle in South Viet Nam, the South Viet Nam people, under the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist Party and the working class, should endeavour to build a worker-peasant army coalition bloc, and set up a broad national united front against the United States-Diem clique on the basis of the worker-peasant alliance."

Five days later the Congress adopted a resolution which embodied the same advocacy of the establishment of a national front for the liberation of South Viet Nam.

Extracts from the Resolution of the Third National Congress of the Lao Dong (Workers) Party of Viet Nam adopted at Hanoi on September 10, 1960.

" . . . In the present stage, the Vietnamese revolution has two strategic tasks: first, to carry out the socialist revolution in North Viet Nam; second, to liberate South Viet Nam from the ruling yoke of the United States imperialists and their henchmen in order to achieve national unity and complete independence and freedom throughout the country. These two strategic tasks are closely related to each other and spur each other forward.

To take the North toward socialism is a necessary and unavoidable task following the completion of the national people's democratic revolution. To take the North toward socialism and make it more and more powerful in every field will benefit the revolutionary movement for the liberation of the South, the development of the revolution throughout the country, and the preservation and consolidation of peace in Indo-China, South-East Asia, and the world. Therefore, to carry out the socialist revolution in the North, in the South we must endeavour to rally all national and democratic forces, expand and consolidate the national unity bloc, isolate the United States imperialists and their henchmen, and speed up the struggle to strengthen peace and reunify our fatherland. That is why the guiding principle of the socialist revolution in the North is: to build the North and take the South into due consideration.

. . . The common task of the Vietnamese revolution at present is: to strengthen the unity of all the people; to struggle resolutely to maintain

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peace; to accelerate the socialist revolution in North Viet Nam while at the same time stepping up the national people's democratic revolution in South Viet Nam. . . .

. . . To ensure the complete success of the revolutionary struggle in South Viet Nam our people there must strive to establish a united bloc of workers, peasants, and soldiers and to bring into being a broad national united front directed against the United States-Diem clique and based on the worker-peasant alliance. This front must rally all the patriotic classes and sections of the people, the majority and minority nationalities, all patriotic parties and religious groupings, together with all individuals inclined to oppose the United States-Diem clique.

The front must carry out its work in a very flexible manner in order to rally all forces that can be rallied, win over all forces that can be won over, neutralize all forces that should be neutralized, and draw the broad masses into the general struggle against the United States-Diem clique for the liberation of the South and the peaceful reunification of the fatherland.

The revolutionary movement in the South plays a very important role in relation to the reunification of the country. Simultaneously with the effort to build the North and advance toward socialism our people must strive to maintain and develop the revolutionary forces in the South and create favourable conditions for peaceful national reunification. . . ."

Writing some months after the Congress, Truong Chinh, a member of the Politburo of the Lao Dong Party, surveyed the work of the Congress in the Party's theoretical journal "Hoc Tap", April, 1961. He concluded that:

" . . . the resolutions of the Third National Party Congress have clearly set forth two strategic responsibilities of the Vietnamese revolution:

1. 'To carry out the socialist revolution in North Viet Nam';
2. 'To liberate South Viet Nam from the ruling yoke of the United States imperialists and their henchmen in order to achieve national unity and complete independence and freedom throughout the country'."

It will have been noted that Le Duan's report quoted above employs the significant phrase "under the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist Party" when he refers to the establishment of a national united front. This phrase is missing from the text of the resolution which was adopted, there being more emphasis on flexibility and on a wide basis of membership. But the omission of this reference, while obviously significant for presentational reasons, did not affect the reality of control of the Front exercised by the leadership of the Vietnamese Communist Party in Hanoi. This will be shown below.

The establishment of a special Communist Party within the Front

The announcement of the Front having been made, a purportedly independent Communist Party was established to be "the party of the working class and labouring people of South Viet Nam". Bernard Fall in his book "The Two Viet Nams" at page 357, refers to the announcement in Hanoi that a conference of representatives of Marxists-Leninists in South Viet Nam took place on 19th December, 1961, to establish the Viet Nam People's Revolutionary Party.

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This announcement required special explanation to the members of the Vietnamese Communist Party (Lao Dong) in South Viet Nam. Extracts from captured Viet Cong documents, the originals of which were submitted to the International Control Commission on 30th May, 1962, were given in the State Department publication "Aggression from the North". One of them is reproduced below:

Extract from captured Viet Cong documents the originals of which were submitted to the International Control Commission on 30th May, 1962.

"In regard to the foundation of the People's Revolutionary Party of South Viet Nam, the creation of this party is only a matter of strategy; it needs to be explained within the party; and, to deceive the enemy, it is necessary that the new party be given the outward appearance corresponding to a division of the party (Lao Dong) into two and the foundation of a new party, so that the enemy cannot use it in his propaganda.

Within the party, it is necessary to explain that the founding of the People's Revolutionary Party has the purpose of isolating the Americans and the Ngo Dinh Diem regime, and to counter their accusations of an invasion of the South by the North. It is means of supporting our sabotage of the Geneva Agreement, of advancing the plan of invasion of the South, and at the same time permitting the Front for Liberation of the South to recruit new adherents, and to gain the sympathy of non-aligned countries in South East Asia.

The Peoples' Revolutionary Party has only the appearance of an independent existence; actually, our party is nothing but the Lao Dong Party of Viet Nam (Viet Minh Communist Party), unified from North to South, under the direction of the central executive committee of the party, the chief of which is President Ho.

During these explanations, take care to keep this strictly secret, especially in South Viet Nam, so that the enemy does not perceive our purpose.

Do not put these explanations in party bulletins."

Conclusions of the International Control Commission

These complicated political steps were carefully recorded and studied by the staff of the International Control Commission which, with an office in Hanoi as well as Saigon, was well placed to analyse their significance. The Legal Committee of the International Control Commission in 1962 summarized the position in careful detail as follows:

" it is the aim of the Viet Nam Lao Dong Party (the ruling Party in the Zone in the North) to bring about the overthrow of the Administration in the South. In September, 1960, the Third Congress of the Viet Nam Lao Dong Party held in Hanoi (in the Zone in the North) passed a resolution calling for the organization of a 'Front' under the leadership of the Viet Nam Lao Dong Party for the overthrow of the Administration in the South. Such a 'Front for Liberation of the South' was, in fact, constituted under the sponsorship of the Viet Nam Lao Dong Party. There are present and functioning in the Zone in the South, branches of the Viet Nam Lao Dong Party and the Front for the Liberation of the South along with its armed branches, namely, the 'Forces for Liberation of the South' and the 'People's Self-Defence Armed Forces'.

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The Viet Nam Lao Dong Party and the Front for Liberation of the South have the identical aim of overthrowing the Administration in the South. The Viet Nam Lao Dong Party, the Front for Liberation of the South, the Forces for Liberation of the South and the People's Self-Defence Armed Forces have disseminated in the Zone in the South propaganda seeking to incite the people to oppose and overthrow the Administration in the South. There exists and functions a 'Voice' of the Front for Liberation of the South and a 'Liberation Press Agency' which assist in the above-mentioned activities. It is probable that Hanoi Radio also has assisted in the said activities. Propaganda literature of the Front for the Liberation of the South and in favour of the activities of the Front has been published in the Zone in the North and has been distributed abroad by the official representatives of the DRVN (North Viet Nam Government).

"The Legal Committee further concludes that:

The aim and function of the Front for Liberation of the South, the Forces for Liberation of the South and the People's Self-Defence Armed Forces are to organize and to carry out under the leadership of the Viet Nam Lao Dong Party, hostile activities against the Armed Forces and the Administration of the South by violent means aimed at the overthrow of the Administration of the South."*

Since these findings were reached in 1962, official statements have continued to appear in Hanoi about North Viet Nam being the "firm base" for the revolution in the South and "the point on which it leans".

Burchett disclosures

Attention might be drawn to recent guarded but revealing remarks of the pro-Viet Cong journalist Wilfred Burchett. Burchett's remarks are made in the course of a carefully written article explaining why the Front leaders in South Viet Nam regard the Agreement on Laotian neutrality and the arrangement for a Laotian Government of National Union as inadequate. The Laotian arrangement was unsatisfactory, according to Front leaders, because it reflected a "temporary crystallisation of forces" (that is to say, it did not reflect the permanent outcome of a fully completed Marxist struggle). But in Viet Nam, in contrast, according to Burchett the Front leaders are determined that the outcome will reflect the dominance of the Front. This is interesting comment in itself as bearing upon any prospects of a coalition government, but what is of special interest here is Burchett's disclosure of the power of the People's Revolutionary Party, the agent of the Vietnamese Communist Party.

Extract from an article by Wilfred Burchett (Australian Journalist with the Viet Cong) published in the Mainichi Daily News, February, 1965.

"In other words, the Front leaders see the outcome of the struggle and the composition of any future government based on the harsh reality of relation of forces. Within the Front is the Marxist, People's Revolutionary Party, a party with inherited prestige of the party formed and headed by Ho Chi Minh and acquired prestige because of the preponderant role People's Revolutionary Party members play in military activities."

* These conclusions of the Legal Committee were quoted in a statement by the Canadian Representative on the International Control Commission on 13th February, 1965.

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If further evidence is needed, the views are recorded below of a French journalist, Georges Chaffard, who was given the unusual opportunity to make an extensive tour of areas of South Viet Nam in the company of Viet Cong guerrilla forces.

Extract from articles in the Paris Weekly Express in April, 1965, by a French journalist, Georges Chaffard, who visited areas of South Viet Nam at the invitation of Viet Cong guerrilla forces.

"The Marxist militant cadres in the Front are the South Vietnamese branch of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party whose successive mishaps have never interrupted their activity. Its head is in Hanoi and since 1930 its leader is Ho Chi Minh. This is a sort of federal movement having its North Vietnamese branch (the Lao Dong Party or Labour Party), the South Vietnamese Branch (the Revolutionary People's Party, member and principal activist of the National Front), the Laotian branch (the Neo-Lao Haksat), and Cambodian branch (the Pracheachon Party or People's Party, presently hibernating).

It is evidently the North Vietnamese party which co-ordinates the whole."

From the foregoing documented information, a number of clear and important conclusions emerge. They may be summarized as follows:

- (i) The National Front for the Liberation of South Viet Nam was established as the instrumentality of the Communist Party of Viet Nam, the Lao Dong Party, itself the governing party of North Viet Nam.
- (ii) Within the National Liberation Front the effective leadership is exercised by the South Vietnamese branch (People's Revolutionary Party) of the Lao Dong Party.
- (iii) When North Viet Nam refers to the Front as the sole true representatives of the people of South Viet Nam it is thus referring to its own Communist Party agency, the People's Revolutionary Party, within the Front.
- (iv) When North Viet Nam says the Front must have "the decisive voice" in the solution of the Viet Nam problem, it is saying that its own agents in the People's Revolutionary Party should have the decisive voice.

These, indeed, were the judgments reached by the Canadian Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Paul Martin, in his parliamentary statement on 8th March, 1965. Canada is a member of the International Control Commission and its views carry special weight. Referring to the conclusions of the International Control Commission's Legal Committee he said: "These indicate quite clearly that the so-called South Viet Nam Liberation Front (of which the Viet Cong are in effect the armed forces) is a creature of the ruling party of North Viet Nam, that it is their common aim to bring about the violent overthrow of the South Vietnamese administration and that the ruling party in North Viet Nam has assisted its agents in South Viet Nam in attempting to attain this objective." Mr. Martin goes on to make a further important observation in relation to the claims of the Front to be a popular and indigenous political organization in South Viet Nam. He says: "I think I hardly need underline what these conclusions mean for the theory one often hears developed that the war in South Viet Nam is essentially an internal revolt."

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